THE DEFENCE OF INDIA - SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The strength, the organisation, the equipment and the training of an army of any country depends very largely on the foreign policy of its government. If the policy is that the country is not to align itself with any other countries in military pacts, but it only wants an army to defend its frontiers against external aggression and to provide for internal security to support civil administration, if such support is required by the latter, then the strength, the organisation, the equipment and the training of such a defence force will naturally be of a certain pattern. If, on the other hand, the government decides to have limited international obligations for not only the defence of its own country but also to assist neighbouring countries in their defence, the strength etc of the armed forces will naturally be different and slightly enlarged than in the previous case. If the policy is one of cooperation with other countries in regard to participation in a global war to defend the accepted idealogies of the countries so grouped together, conditions of strength, organisation etc will naturally have to be much more enlarged than in the previous two cases. Therefore, as I see it, one cannot possibly divorce the foreign policy and the internal requirements of a country from the strength, the organisation, the equipment and the training of its defence forces. The following article on the Defence Forces of India is written on this basis.

India's policy of non-alignment with any country or countries entering into any military pacts has been very clearly and firmly declared by our Government. There are no two thoughts about this. India's defence forces are mainly and solely required for the defence of India against external aggression and also to give any help to local administration should such help be required for the maintenance of local law and order, and to participate whenever possible in our Nation Building work without prejudicing or interfering with the main vital duty of the services which is preparedness at all times to defend the country.

However, Wars of today are total wars. When once they start, they spread like wild fire engulfing countries of all sizes, whether they like it or not unless some have the good fortune to be "by passed" by them. In view of India's foreign policy of non-alignment and non-participation in any military pacts, we can assume that in the next World War - please God let there be no more wars - India may not be involved in any conflict. However, India is not likely to sit and watch as a complacent spectator if and when democracy is aggressed unprovoked by any totalitarian power. This apart, our only conflict will be in self defence. This conflict, as I see it, could only be between India and one of our neighbouring countries. It is for this conflict and this alone - India's Defence Forces should now be organised and trained. With the limited financial, economic and industrial resources we have, we cannot possibly have a defence force strong enough to defend ourselves against any major first class modern power of today.

The strength of a country, in these days, should be measured not in terms of its armed might alone, but in terms of four essential factors with the armed might coming as the fifth one. These factors are:-

a. A people with high morale, who will, with their backs to the wall and heads and chins up, face any national emergency with grit and determination

and never say "die" but will make any sacrifice with whatever implements and tools and weapons they may have to defend their homeland. People should show up their best in the worst crisis which they may be called upon to face. A people with guts and grit are wanted.

b. Economic stability. Unless the economy of a country is stable and the people can have their essentials - which are:-

i at least two square meals a day;

ii a roof to sleep under;

iii clothes to wear;

iv domestic and other security;

v normal amenities of life such as medical, educational and social;

the security of a country cannot be assured by its military strength alone.

c. Industrial self-sufficiency as far as possible. No country can be one hundred per cent self-sufficient in this respect, but it can be to a large percent. Unless one can make ones own weapons, ammunition, transport - build ships, construct aircraft in one's own factories, a country cannot sustain in any war of today. As soon as the reserves built up from supplies from overseas have been used up, such a country will be at the mercy of its aggressors.

d. A virile people with a high standard of physical fitness. Men and women, young and old, who are well built, healthy, hardy and so on.

With all these four requisites, the military strength takes its fifth place. So, if we have these essential pre-requisits to provide for the defence of our country, then we will only want a small well organised, well equipped, very highly trained regular standing army, officered and manned by the best young men in the country. This army would, naturally, be a mobile one with its necessary complimentary units which need not be so mobile, but are considered adequate to fight on the terrain that obtain on our frontiers - an army which can be expanded rapidly at short notice. This army would be backed up by a well organised and a large Territorial Army. A large Reserve of all ranks of all arms, of all services, also properly organised, equipped and given adequate periodical training to keep them up to scratch is another essential requirement. Behind these three organisations, there should be intensive and large scale training of the youth in the National Cadet Corps. These would provide recruits for the officer cadre in the Defence Services.

Our fields should produce enough food for the people. Our factories which in peace time should produce the needs of our country, in regard to primary, secondary and major industries, would be converted into factories producing war equipment, tanks, transport, weapons and so on, in war time, at short notice without any delay or confusion. Until such times as our industry is properly organised and geared up to meet our peace and war time requirements, it would seem to be

necessary, in fact essential, that we must have now friendly country or countries who would guarantee to us to supply our equipment, munitions and such other requirements for our Defence Services both in peace and in war. This is a very important matter.

We should make the Defence Forces self-supporting to a very great extent to carry out their task in defending the country against aggression by a second class power and no more. For this, if the people as a whole, rich and poor, old and young, men and women, do not have as I have said above, high morale and are not themselves physically and mentally virile, no matter how well organised, how well equipped and how well trained our Defence Forces may be, the country's security cannot be guaranteed. So, it is the inescapable duty of those who have the good fortune to be in authority today to see that they make their influence felt amongst those who are not so fortunate, to build up the morale of our people. In this building up, we must, at all times, concentrate on instilling in the minds of all, the necessity to have sterling character, a high standard of discipline, a sense of team work, of loyalty, of responsibility, of duty, of the dignity of labour, and of the need to be physically, mentally morally active and fit. I may be accused of being too idealistic - of talking of impossible things, but I am doing neither. Having had the good fortune to have served my country as a soldier for nearly 34 years of my life and having had the opportunities to meet and talk to thousands and thousands of our youth and our people, I have great faith in ourselves. I have faith in our youth. I have faith in our people of all classes. These must be made to think and act as Indians. Alas, today, what unity there was before we got our freedom when we were all collectively lined up against a foreign ruler, is on the wane. We are getting more and more dis-united, as a result of our slavishness to sentimental slogans uttered ceaselessly in respect of our parochial interests and outlook. Brahmins Vs Non-Brahmins - Gujarathies Vs Marathies - Sikhs Vs Hindus and so on. Wicked. This is not the picture we should see in our country. When we talk of the Defence Forces of India to defend her frontiers against external aggression, please let us remember that the gallant officers and men who man our three Services also come from the various communities - Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, Gujrathies, Marathies, Sikhs, Hindus and so on. When they find that those outside the Services are ranging themselves into groups in terms of their communal feelings and interests, can one not see the real danger of this frightful disease spreading into the Defence Services too. Thank God, it is not there now and "please God let it never be contaminated with this disgusting and deplorable disease". Nevertheless, one never can tell, when there is so much of hostility between various political parties, each vieing with the other to gain power, there is danger of the Defence Services also getting communally minded. If this happens, it will be the death knell of our Independence. This must be avoided.

These are all factors, which must be - whether one likes or not - given very serious thought to, when we discuss the Defence Services of the country. At the moment, we spend a very big portion of our meagre financial resources on our Defence Services. This is inevitable in view of the strained feelings between ourselves and our next-door neighbour. This cannot be helped. We have, I know, our Defence Forces kept in pretty good trim to take on a second class power, but let me be frank - have we our industry so developed to be able to meet the demands of the armed forces for their equipment of all kinds. In these days of mechanised warfare when scientific advances in technical matters have made such great progress, we have to depend, to a very large extent, on foreign supplies of our war equipment needs. This is dangerous. Our Navy is not big enough

to look after the security of the thousands of miles of our coast line. Our Airforce can be strenthened a little more too. I have expressed in this paper a number of factors which must receive the immediate attention of higher authority and our people.

In any army, one of the most powerful weapons is high morale in officers and men. Unless this is obtained, no amount of provision of the best possible tanks or the biggest guns or the most accurate rifles and so on would produce the necessary weapons to win wars. Some of the factors which help to build high morale are - personal and physical fitness, ease of mind about domestic affairs, faith in the leaders, in the equipment, in the weapons provided and the righteousness of the cause for which the soldier is called to fight for his country. It is the duty of higher authority to see that these above factors do receive their intimate and earnest attention. The soldier wants to be free of domestic worries, about the welfare of his wife and children, the education of his children, the looking after of whatever property he may have when he joins the Army. He must be free of these worries when having done his job as a soldier he returns to civil life. If the soldier has the assurance that when he returns to civil life, he will have the help of his civilian comrades for his rehabilitation, he will be prepared to make any sacrifice including the supreme one which is his readiness to give his life for the country when he goes to fight.

So, in laying down the policy for the strength, organisation, equipment and the training of our Defence Forces, everyone of us must bear in mind the above factors. In fact, in modern wars, everyone is a soldier - be he on the battle-field or off it. Everybody must have the necessary discipline and a sense of duty which are mentioned above, to play his part in our efforts to make the country strong in all respects, to defend her against external aggression. I know we can do this. Our people are magnificent. They will answer any call made of them to make sacrifices for the country, but they must have good leadership. Given good leadership and conditions stated above, our country's Defence Forces can be and will be the most toughest, the most efficient and the most reliable in the world.

We must all get down to hard and practical thinking. It is never too soon.